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INVESTIGATING SASQUATCH EVIDENCE IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

JAMES A. HEWKIN[1]
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife,
Forest Grove, Oregon 97116, U.S.A.

ABSTRACT: Unpublicized Sasquatch investigations were conducted in remote areas of the Cascade Mountains of Oregon, and other areas of the Pacific Northwest, over a 10-year period beginning in 1973. Various forms of evidence were uncovered, including eyewitness testimony, footprint tracks, split stumps and logs, and rock piles. Some of the evidence indicates the presence of a still-unrecognized species of large, bipedal primate in North America.

INTRODUCTION

As a professional wildlife biologist, the author first became interested in Sasquatch reports in the late 1950's. Since that time, Sasquatch, believed by many to be an unknown, bipedal primate, remains unrecognized as a living member of the natural fauna on the North American continent. Sighting reports continue to make news in the Northwest; the sources are citizens of all walks of life. However, numerous sighting reports are not made public, and are not solicited. Good Sasquatch data are difficult to obtain. There are hundreds of Sasquatch stories. Many do not bear scrutiny, while those of sound basis spark considerable interest among serious investigators. Readers interested in general works on the subject should refer to Byrne (1975), Green (1978), Hunter with Dahinden (1973), Markotic and Krantz (1984), Napier (1973), and Sprague and Krantz (1979).

The author's part-time Sasquatch investigations in the field started in 1973. These were conducted in an unpublicized, low-key manner. More than 200 trips were taken into remote mountain areas, mostly on the western slope of the Oregon Cascades; some time was also expended in the Coast Ranges, Siskiyous and British Columbia. Most Pacific Northwest areas where Sasquatch has been reported have been visited, primarily to determine if here is a discernible pattern of evidence. I have concluded that Sasquatch is a wilderness animal associated with remote, rugged areas, and I have selected evidence that may have value in eventually developing a realistic description of this animal. This paper includes observations of rock piles and pits, examination of torn up stumps and logs, the finding of footprints, and interviews with witnesses.

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[1]Present address: 35237 Aubuchon Drive, St. Helens, Oregon 97051, U.S.A.

Ecology of the Western Slope of the Cascade Mountains

Before intervention by man, the western slopes of the Cascade Mountains were dominated by dense stands of old-growth coniferous forests. Now there are hundreds of thousands of acres of timberland growing into diverse plant communities of second-growth forest. Forestlands are replanted with conifers, but growth rates, survival, and health vary with soil type, elevation, exposure, moisture, and a host of other factors, including insects, fire, disease, etc. Human intervention and population growth have eliminated considerable forest habitat, while creating urban areas and intensively-managed agricultural lands. Most remaining old-growth forest is located in remote rugged portions of the mountain ranges.

In general, lower- to mid-elevation forests contain a mix of Douglas fir, hemlock, and western red cedar (about 1,500 to 3,000 feet elevation). These species give way to Pacific silver fir, noble fir, and mountain hemlock at higher elevations (about 3,000 to 4,500 feet). Subalpine meadows are present on some high ridges (about 4,200 to 5,500 feet), often associated with volcanic upthrust that form rock points and steep talus slides. Riparian habitats include swift bouldered streams, small lakes, ponds, and bogs, which provide good biotic diversity. Common mammals include mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), elk (*Cervus elaphus*), puma (*Felis concolor*), bobcat (*Felis rufus*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), black bear (*Ursus americanus*), and many smaller animals. Habitat alterations by man cause dramatic changes in the abundance and distribution of these animal populations.

Most moisture falls in the form of snow in the higher elevations (above 3,200 feet) throughout the winter months (November to March). In general, the region receives a high amount of rainfall (about 48 inches annually in low elevations, and as much as 78 inches in the higher elevations). The winter snowpack in the higher elevations will vary 3 to 9 feet, depending on exposure and drift. Generally, by early June, hard-packed snow remains on the ridges at the 4,000-foot elevation. July and August are generally dry. In many areas, the understory is difficult to penetrate by foot travel, and access is usually gained by game trails and/or established trail systems. The U.S. Forest Service maintains a few trails, but many have been abandoned. Plant species forming dense stands include salal, sword fern, Oregon grape, thimbleberry and salmonberry in various combinations and sometimes in pure stands. Rhododendron often forms the understory of elevations above 3,500 feet, and fingers of white alder thickets are common along steep spring-fed slopes. These shrubs are generally deformed by the heavy annual winter snow drifts that remain until mid-June.

Review of Evidence

Rock piles and pits.—One of the most revealing Sasquatch sightings reported took place in the Oregon Cascades in 1967. A logger described the activities of what he thought was a family of three Sasquatches (two adults and an infant) as they searched for hibernating rodents on a rocky ridge, digging up rocks and piling them up, finding nests of rodents, and eating them on the spot (Green 1968).

On September 3, 1973, I located this site after spending 3 days searching the area. Further examination on the ridge indicated many old rock piles and diggings. The only digging marks that appeared fresh were those which had been reported by the logger. During several seasons of visiting this area, I noted the presence of chipmunks (*Eutamias*), golden-mantled ground squirrels (*Spermophilus lateralis*), and pikas (*Ochotona princeps*). The golden-mantled ground squirrel is perhaps the best candidate for the meals which were reportedly dug up by the Sasquatches. These small rodents are heavy sleepers, and remain in a comatose state during hibernation.

While searching other ridges and canyons in the Cascades, I found much evidence of similar rock piles and pits. They were very old and moss-covered, with only one digging that appeared fresh. A departure from the pits and rock piles was an odd arrangement of trench-like excavations located on a remote rocky butte. The rocks were weathered and covered with lichens, indicating the digging was very old. Most of these rocks were of a size a man could handle (15–50 pounds), but it is difficult to explain the digging in terms of human activity. Approximately 50 feet of trench extended along the side of a steep talus slope, and another trench, approximately 15 feet in length, jutted away on another angle along the slope. I propose that Sasquatches may have piled rocks in this manner while attempting to capture pikas. These little rodents do not hibernate, and they would be difficult to catch while scampering under rocks.

In 1974, I teamed up with Jack Sullivan, who had worked intermittently with other Sasquatch investigators since the summer of 1969, and who was knowledgeable on other investigations in the Northwest. Through Sullivan, I was able to meet the logger who had reportedly witnessed the Sasquatches piling rocks. I conversed with this logger on several occasions, and always found him sincere, interesting, and not anxious to create publicity. (Sullivan and I interviewed several other witnesses during an 8-year period, and we conducted about two dozen field trips. However, our part-time commitment meant we were always short on time to expand on these activities.)

On June 23, 1978, I located a different arrangement of rock piles in a canyon. This work also was old and covered with lichens and moss. However, the rocks were quite large (5 to 100+ pounds), had been piled in heaps, and were associated with trenches. There were 22 rock piles of various sizes (3–6 feet high). Some of these rocks were too large for a human to handle.

In order to satisfy my curiosity as to whether miners could have been involved, I led a person who was acquainted with gold mining to this site; he stated that the digging and rock piles didn't make any sense to him. This particular site was located at the bottom of a slide area.

Footprints.—The terrain in the Cascade Mountains is not easy for foot travel, and it does not show footprints clearly. It is usually hard and rocky, or in heavy timber. The forest floor is often "springy," with thick moss and leaf litter. Only on two occasions have I noticed strange prints which could be interpreted as having been made by Sasquatch. The first incident occurred in September, 1973. I had been examining a large mound of vegetation piled by pikas, when I noticed a track of scuff marks across the talus slope a short distance away. Upon close examination, the scuff marks appeared to be tracks left by a very heavy animal, because it had dislodged rocks at each step, causing an impression in the talus. My own walking over the same area seldom disturbed a rock. The distance between scuff marks varied between 4 and 5 feet. I followed the track across the talus to a sheer drop, which blocked access to a brushy ravine and to an overhanging ledge on a higher level.

Backtracking and working my way down into the timber, I finally managed to get into the ravine, and was struggling through dense rhododendron, when I spotted a small opening. As I stepped forward, I saw, embedded in dry woody duff, a large footprint, about 5 inches longer than my 12-inch boot track, and also wider. There was no toe detail, only a broad, flat print, with some taper to the heel, which was rounded and wider than my boot heel. I had no idea how old the print was, but I assumed it was probably related to the scuff marks I had followed across the talus, since it was on about the same contour level in the canyon. This was the only unidentified track noted in that area over several seasons.

The following year, on October 1, 1974, I found three unidentified prints in another drainage at an elevation of about 2,500 feet. These prints were only 10 inches long, and the stride was 48 inches, each print in a straight line with the other. The soft sand did not permit toe detail. Although the prints were shorter than my boot print, they were slightly wider. Upstream about a quarter of a mile, I noticed where the track-maker had apparently jumped from a large rock which overhung the stream channel on the far bank, and had sunk deep heel prints into the wet sand at the edge of a pool. The fore part of the foot did not mark. This particular site is in a deeply forested canyon of mixed timber, fir, maple, and alder. The area is drained by a small, fast-flowing, bouldered stream.

Grubbing.—Bears are known to spend much time searching for food items such as rodents, roots, and grubs in old stumps and logs. Perhaps Sasquatches likewise search for similar food on the forest floor, grubbing through rotten logs and stumps and turning over rocks.

On April 28, 1975, while investigating a tract of second-growth timber (a mix of fir, hemlock, and cedar) at about 2,800 feet elevation, I noticed a stump that was freshly torn away on one side, and salal brush pulled off the top of the stump. There was no sign of claw marks on the stump. Tracking

was impossible because of a dense understory of salal. A few feet distant, a log 4 feet in diameter was broken off at one end, and there was a dry area, 1 foot square, scraped clean (in a sheltered section on top of the log) where duff had been swept off. This activity could easily be passed over as bear sign, but no claw marks were evident.

Sullivan and I found similar signs of activity in the Cascades on August 9, 1975, at about 3,500 feet elevation, in a patch of old-growth timber. Two rotted logs had been broken apart, and some pieces and slabs of wood were lying on top of the logs. The pieces of wood were about 3–4 feet long, and 4–6 inches thick. Other logs in the immediate area had evidence of fresh breakage, showing similar treatment, but without chunks of wood placed on top of them. If Sasquatches did this work, it appears they broke up the log by hand, and examined the pieces, leaving some lying on the log. A human could do the same—if he or she were strong enough to tear up the log. However, it is doubtful that a bear was involved, since no claw marks were visible on the logs.

Probably the most informative evidence uncovered came about via a report from a witness who stated that she had seen some large tracks in 2 inches of fresh snow in her backyard in the Cascade foothills. Neither Sullivan nor I could look into this report at the time because of other responsibilities. However, about a week later, I had the opportunity to investigate the incident. I interviewed the family on March 7, 1976. The witness, the mother of several children, was the only person in the family who had actually observed the tracks; she thought they were human tracks, but she could not understand why they were so big—about 1.5 feet in length, and spaced about 9 feet apart. Unfortunately, she had not bothered to go outside to examine the tracks closely; she had simply looked at them through the kitchen window. She also stated how angry she had been about their dog barking "like crazy" all night, not letting up until her daughters left for school in the morning. She then noticed the tracks while washing the breakfast dishes.

Before leaving the area, I talked to another man, who lived about a mile away, who claimed to have heard strange scratching noises on his back wall about a week earlier. His dog had also behaved erratically. He was not known to the woman who had seen the prints.

A week later, Sullivan and I investigated the area adjacent to this man's residence. Being a low-elevation area (about 1,000 feet), snow does not remain on the ground long, and unfortunately, the snow that had fallen prior to the woman's sighting of the tracks had melted. The hills in this vicinity are timbered with second-growth Douglas fir, and a mixture of alder and maple. The ground cover is dominated by salal brush. In general, this foothills area contains an abundance of small drainages containing water year-round. Spring seepages that form boggy areas are common, and these sites

characteristically support dense stands of thimbleberry, salmonberry, and devil's club, in pure stands and mixed. The old-growth timber had been logged off about 50 years before, and the stumps and logs remaining were in a rotting stage. Salal brush had established luxuriant growth on the top of many of these stumps.

Sullivan and I found some strange evidence only a short distance from the man's residence (approximately 200 yards). An old-growth log had been split lengthwise, and the halves were lying side by side, almost touching. This particular log was approximately 3–4 feet in diameter, and about 20 feet long, quite rotted throughout, but which would still require tremendous strength for any animal to pull apart into two pieces.

Approximately 50 yards uphill from the split log was a stump with a fresh tear in one side from top to bottom, and the salal brush and bark had been ripped off. The stump was about 6 feet high and 4–5 feet in diameter, which is about average for old-growth stumps in this area. Another stump of similar size located a few yards beyond had also been torn on one side with salal brush pulled off the top of the stump. We searched for tracks, but could only find a partial indentation alongside one-half of the split log. It appeared to be the outside edge of a footprint in damp soil mixed with alder leaves and litter. There was no visible sign of the toes or heel. The total length of the print was about 12 inches.

More evidence was uncovered later in the day as we walked along an old skid road in a small wooded canyon approximately 1.5 miles from the earlier investigation site. Our initial impression was that someone had turned rocks over to enable vehicle access. The trail was rough but passable with 4×4 vehicles. By replacing one rock back into the original position, we realized it would not high-center a vehicle. These rocks were of a large, flat type, the largest being about a foot or so in length, and possible for a human to handle. They were turned over and lying beside their original position in the road. For a distance of about 50 years, there were 10 to 12 rocks that had been turned. This was the only sector of the trail showing large rock. There was no indication of vehicle use on the road, and we discounted the work of a person moving the rocks—unless someone was attempting a prank, which seemed unrealistic under the circumstances of our unpublicized investigation. No one had been aware that I was going to visit the residence where tracks had been reported by the woman. The conversation with the second individual was a spur-of-the-moment contact, over a mile away from the track location, and the two individuals claimed not to be acquainted. Our investigations in the wooded areas were unknown to anyone but ourselves.

The above collection of evidence, although not conclusive, was very impressive to us. We surmised that the rocks had been turned over during a search for grubs, beetles, etc.; the split log and torn stumps are a source of small rodents, roots, and grubs. Although bear activity is similar, no claw

marks were visible, and the split log was simply too large for a bear to tear apart. The following accounts are of other logs later found split open with no claw marks:

On April 19, 1976, I examined a freshly split log and several torn stumps. This site was below the snow line, at about 2,500 feet elevation, in a heavy stand of second-growth Douglas fir and hemlock, with a dense ground cover of salal. Most old-growth logs in this area were between 3 and 4 feet in diameter. No claw marks were visible on the stumps, and no tracks were found in the area.

On January 14, 1978, I examined a large rotted log, about 3 feet in diameter, that had been rolled over and split lengthwise. This site was in the Coast Ranges in Clatsop County. No discernible claw marks were noted on the log to indicate bear activity. This site was on a mountainside covered with second-growth Douglas fir. The ground cover was mostly sword fern.

On January 2, 1980, a small split log (20 inches) was located together with an unidentified, partial footprint parallel to, and against, a split half of log. The location was in second-growth fir timber, with an understory of vine maple on the eastern slope of the Coast Ranges. This partial print was similar to the one mentioned above (a portion of outside foot edge).

Over the years, many torn stumps were investigated, but only the few split logs mentioned above have been found. Many of the torn stumps revealed claw marks, indicating bear activity, but *all* of the split logs were devoid of claw marks. Although not conclusive, this evidence indicates that an animal more powerful than a bear is present, and is capable of splitting logs by use of powerful shoulder and arm muscles.

Carrion.—One of the strangest reports came from a man who told us of his experiences trapping coyotes in 1970. He had dragged cattle carcasses with a 4×4 pickup truck to a brushy area, and had set traps around them. The cattle were obtained from a neighbor's feed lot, where they had died.

His troubles began when he found his traps sprung by someone or something using sticks. Thinking it was a neighbor with whom he was not on good terms, he accused him of the deed. He then discovered that one of the cows had been moved a short distance; later, it disappeared. One day he found a cow hanging in the low crotch of an alder tree. This was obviously beyond normal human capability, because the carcasses weighed 500 pounds and more. He apologized to his neighbor, and gave up trapping—having succeeded in capturing only one coyote. Sasquatch stories were unknown to him at the time, and no tracks were noted at the site. Of interest was the fact that none of the carcasses had been even partially eaten before they were found; however, the one carcass disappeared, and was never found. Other predators, even ravens, avoided the trap site.

When Sullivan and I were investigating the general area (about 100 square miles) in 1976, we were aware of 12 local Sasquatch reports. The area is

occupied by small farms and woodlots, but is primarily a foothills range comprising second-growth Douglas fir timber, with a mix of alder and maple. Logging activity was in progress, and a maze of logging roads penetrated most of the area. Off-road travel into the forest, however, was extremely difficult due to dense stands of salal brush, salmonberry, thimbleberry, and devil's club. Of the 12 Sasquatch reports, five involved actual sightings of an animal, and seven were of tracks. The reports occurred between 1968 and 1976, and involved every month of the year except June and July. Track reports invariably followed a fresh snowfall.

Another case involving carrion came from Jack Woodruff, an investigator who lived in the Coast Ranges, on the east fork of the Coquille River, in Oregon. We visited him on January 4, 1975, and he allowed us to make copies of the Sasquatch footprint casts he had made along a river near his home. The story, as he related it, involved a large buck deer that had died from injuries following a collision with a vehicle. The deer had managed to stagger several yards up a skid road before it died. The carcass was reported missing several days later by a neighbor. On a later date, the neighbor had found the skeleton of a buck deer in the timber above the cut bank where the body had lain. Lack of drag marks indicated that it had been carried up the bank and into the timber. The skeleton of the deer, lying on its back, was intact, with all bones in place. The hair, scraped off the animal, was piled to one side. Woodruff recalled that a logger had once found an elk carcass in similar condition, also with the hair piled to one side of the skeleton. As far as I know, this type of observation regarding the handling of carrion by an unidentified animal has not been reported in print.

I investigated another case involving carrion on June 18, 1979. This incident involved a high school student near the town of Barriere, British Columbia, who told of shooting at a Sasquatch from a blind, at a distance of about 50 feet. There were some new elements in his story, which could be compared to prior reports.

A few days before the incident took place, he had happened upon a concealed, fresh deer carcass buried under forest litter. He stressed how well the carcass had been hidden, as the litter which had been sprinkled over it appeared to be identical to the natural terrain. He would not have noticed it, but he had been standing near it and had noticed part of a foot. Later, he visited the site again, and saw that some of the carcass had been eaten. He then built a blind about 50 feet away, intending to shoot a bear. He waited in the blind while two of his friends fished from a boat in a small lake in sight of the blind. The creature appeared at the site near 5 p.m. He aimed and fired at its head, and the animal went down on its knuckles, leaped up immediately, and ran off, extremely quickly, on two legs. His description was similar to that in other Sasquatch reports: 8 feet tall, 4-foot shoulders, forehead slanted back, bulky build, and black hair. The chest

region was devoid of hair ("it appeared worn off"). This may sound suspicious to some investigators, but body hair can vary extensively among hominoids.

The witness suggested that I talk to his high school teacher, and to the two boys who had been fishing that day at the lake, so I contacted them later in the day. The teacher had a cast of a 16-inch footprint which he had taken near the site. It was very wide across the toes (10 inches), and tapered to a relatively narrow heel, but still wider than a human heel. The boys believed that the deer had been killed at the lake edge because they had found deer hair there, and the carcass was wet. Also, they stated that debris that covered the carcass had to be carried from somewhere. There was no evidence of material having been scratched up in the immediate vicinity.

At this point, it should be noted that local investigators who reacted to the report of this incident brushed it aside as a routine bear report (*Oregon Journal,* May 9, 1979). Although my interview with the boys and family members was 2 months later, there was no evidence to indicate that a bear was involved. The incident was either a hoax or had occurred and was witnessed as reported. My personal judgment was that the individuals involved were informative and sincere.

Discussion and Conclusions

The evidence cited above tends to support the existence of an animal which has been named Sasquatch. This information may aid other investigators, and stimulate searches for evidence.

Although only a few footprints were located, these few lend support to the many hundreds of others reported over the decades in the Pacific Northwest. Other evidence indicates a large animal grubbing for food by ripping up rotten stumps and logs. Food items of interest would be roots, small rodents, and beetle grubs. Although this type of grubbing is a common activity for black bears, no claw marks were observed in these instances. Furthermore, the large logs split lengthwise appear to rule out bears as the perpetrators, as such animals would not have the necessary strength, and no claw marks were visible on the logs.

Other incidents investigated indicate carrion is a source of food, and may be the primary reason for the odor associated with Sasquatch sightings. The involvement of carrion suggests the possibility of these animals caching large carcasses for use during winter months, when food is scarce. Such a habit would be crucial to sustain an animal the size of Sasquatch, estimated to stand 8 feet tall and to weigh as much as 800 pounds (Krantz 1986).

Reports of these animals consistently indicate they are present in wilderness areas. Since they are unique in their size and behavior, they should not be compared to humans or other primates. Green (1978) cites several noc-

turnal sightings of Sasquatch, which suggests they may have night vision, an asset absent in known large primates.

After a decade of investigating Sasquatch evidence in the field, and after studying the writings and evidence presented by others, I can now report my own personal conclusions. First, the evidence indicates that a species of giant, bipedal primate, weighing up to 800 pounds and standing as tall as 8 feet, and known as Sasquatch, does, in fact, exist. Its diet is probably omnivorous, with feeding habits similar to those of bears (grubbing for roots, larvae, etc.). It searches for rodents in stumps, logs, and rock slides. It might cache meat for winter use. The offensive odor which is sometimes reported in association with eyewitness sightings could be, in part, from the eating and handling of putrid meat. The source could be carrion and animals caught and then cached.

These primates live in remote, wilderness areas. They may have night vision, and may be more active at night. They may have the ability to sleep through prolonged periods of adverse weather, although there is as yet no evidence to support this hypothesis.

The only known enemy of Sasquatch is man, both directly and indirectly. Several reports of shootings have been published. The precise impact of man's activities upon its habitat is unknown, but wilderness areas are shrinking into smaller tracts each year due to road building, logging, and other forms of natural resource use. On the other hand, second-growth timber and other vegetative growth following logging of large tracts of land may benefit Sasquatch as a source of food and cover, as it has benefited many other wildlife species.

If Sasquatch has survived in North America without official recognition, it has been because it is elusive and intelligent, more so than other mammals in the area, and more so than other living apes in Africa and Asia. Whether Sasquatch is a hominoid or hominid, such as a descendant of the Plio-Pleistocene genus *Gigantopithecus* (Krantz 1986), remains unresolved. For now, we have the frustrating situation of failure by most scientific authorities and official bodies to examine the evidence for this species—much less to acknowledge its existence.

The Sasquatch represents a scientific problem in need of a thorough study to bring it into the zoological perspective and dimension it deserves: recognition as an extant species, and consideration for its role in the ecosystems of the Pacific Northwest. Once its behavioral peculiarities—which so far have kept it from scientific discovery—are better understood, this species will be susceptible to scientific field study just as other animal species have been eventually studied in their own habitat.

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